THE CHILDREN OF THE LION

ASHLEY GIBSON

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Began to give the Sacred Fish their Breakfast.

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ASHLEY GIBSON

ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
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THE CHILDREN OF THE LION

By Ashley Gibson

THE TIMES OF CEYLON COMPANY LTD
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TO MY WIFE.

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FOREWORD.

THE first eight of the following little papers are the outcome of a desire on the writer's part to put within the wider reach of an English reading public, in the form of connected narrative, a few characteristic examples of the "Mahavansa" tales. It is in Dr. Geiger's scholarly translation of the classic Sinhalese work, a mine of blended history, myth, and fantasy, that he has mainly delved. The remaining sketch was written to amuse himself and appease the Editor of the *Times of Ceylon* Christmas Number.

The Children of the Lion.

KING and Queen reigning in a far country had a little daughter, and at her birth they ordered the soothsayers to make divinations, for they looked for a fair and auspicious future for this lovely child. And drawing lines in the sand and making study of the stars they foretold that the child would grow up fairer than her mother, who was a most beautiful Princess and the only daughter of a King. But they prophesied that she would be wayward and troublesome, a prey to strange longings. "It is written in the sand," they said, "that thy daughter shall be bride to the King of Beasts." And the child blossomed into a maiden lovelier than any in her father's Kingdom, but capricious and wilful, and so desirous of admiration that for very shame her parents could not suffer her, and be-

came cold to this Princess who did them so little honour.

Having small pride in her Kingly ancestry the Princess fled one morning from her father's Palace, and desiring the joy of an independent life she joined a wandering caravan travelling to the Magadha country. As none recognized her or sought to check her in her wild behaviour she was for a time perfectly happy.

One day, on the borders of the Lala country, a huge lion sprang out from the forest and felled the leader of the caravan with one blow of his paw. The travellers rushed hither and thither, mad with fright, and in a minute all had hidden themselves among the bushes.

Quivering with excitement, the Princess peeped out from behind the trunk of a mango tree, where she had sprung when panic overtook her companions. She saw that the road was empty, save for the dead man and the lion, who, with one paw resting upon his prey,

raised his majestic head and roared like thunder.

When she marked the lion's noble mien, the massive symmetry of his limbs and his waving tail and kingly mane, a curious tremor shook the limbs of the Princess.

At that moment the lion caught sight of her.

Quitting his prey, he advanced towards her with dignified gait. His tail waved more gently, his ears were laid back, and his roaring ceased to shake the earth. Like a giant cat, he rubbed her knees with his velvety muzzle.

Without fear, she stroked his silky mane, and beneath her touch the muscles of his shoulders twitched under his tawny skin.

And the lion picked her up in his teeth without hurting her, as his mother had taught him how to do, and padded swiftly and without sound into the jungle.

When she had dwelt a year in the lion's cave, the Princess woke up one morning to find two little babies crying at her breast.

She saw that the little boy was strong and healthy, but that there was something odd about the shape of his hands and feet, so she called him Sihabahu. But the little girl's fingers and toes were as perfectly modelled as her own, and she called her Sihasivali.

And for sixteen years they lived in the cave. The lion brought them food and drink, and couched beside them purring in the fierceness of his love.

When the lion had gone hunting one morning Sihabahu said :

" Why is it, dear mother, that you and our father are so different ?"

Then the Princess was very troubled, but she told her son all the story, even from the time when the soothsayers had made divinations, drawing lines in the sand.

" But why do we stay here ?" said Sihabahu.

"Thy father has closed up the cave with a rock," the Princess told him.

Then Sihabahu sprang up, seized the rock and placed it on his shoulder, and so ran forth fifty leagues into the jungle and back in one day.

The next time his father the lion went out hunting, Sihabahu picked up the Princess and Sihasivali, spurned the rock away from the mouth of the cave with his foot, and bore mother and sister both with speed to a border village, many leagues from the cave. And as they went the three fashioned themselves garments of leaves.

Now there dwelt in the village a cousin of the Princess, being ruler of that province, whom, as they came forth from the jungle, they beheld while he sat giving judgments under a banyan tree.

"Who are these?" he asked his secretaries.

"We are forest-folk," said the Princess.

"You don't look very civilized, certainly," said the ruler of the province. And he commanded the village people to give these vagrants any of their old clothes that they could spare.

When they had donned these, the Princess and her children appeared as if clad in the most gorgeous apparel.

Then the ruler of the province ordered food to be offered to them on leaves as if they had been humble folk, and immediately the leaves were turned into platters of gold.

"I thought you said you were jungle-folk," said the ruler of the province.

"So we are," said Sihasivali, for that was all she knew about it.

"I suppose I'd better tell you," said Sihabahu. "She's only a girl and doesn't know anything, and my mother here seems to be ashamed of the whole business." And then he told the ruler of the province the entire story, beginning with the soothsayers who had drawn lines in the sand.

"Well, I never!" said the ruler of the province. And then he looked at the Princess and saw that she was still very beautiful, and considering that she must be his cousin he asked her to marry him. The two children were given servants to wait upon them, and plenty of pocket-money.

While all this was going on the lion, having finished his hunting, made speed back to the cave, craving for the fellowship of his loved ones. But he found the stone rolled away and the cave quite empty, and he mourned bitterly for his family, especially Sihabahu, of whom he was very proud. And wild with grief he ranged the whole country round searching for his lost ones. He came roaring through village after village, and everywhere men fled before him.

And one came in haste to the King, saying: "A lion ravages thy Kingdom. Shield thy people, O King, in this extremity."

The King was too busy to go himself, but he sent a crier forth on an ele-

phant's back, proclaiming a reward of a thousand pieces of gold to anyone who would slay the lion. But as no one was enterprising enough to accept this offer the King had to raise the reward to two thousand pieces of gold, and then to three thousand.

Though he was allowed plenty of pocket-money, Sihabahu always lost it at once in gambling with the youths who lounged in his step-father's court-yard, and when the King's reward was proclaimed from the back of an elephant he was anxious to make trial for it, but his mother restrained him. When the reward was raised the first time she only kept him back with difficulty, and when the King made it three thousand pieces of gold, Sihabahu spoke rudely to his mother and ran out of the house. He ran all the way to the Capitol, where he kicked open the door of the royal treasury and took the three thousand pieces at once, because he thought the King might change his mind.

Then he asked to be taken before the King, who, impressed by his strength

and boldness, offered him half the kingdom if he could succeed in vanquishing the lion.

And Sihabahu went swiftly forth from the city towards the cave.

From afar the lion where he lay at the mouth of his cave saw his son coming swiftly through the jungle, and purring with love he leapt to greet him and fawn upon him. But Sihabahu's greeting was an arrow that came speeding swiftly from his bow. So great was the lion's tenderness towards his son that the arrow rebounded from his forehead and fell at the boy's feet; and so it happened a second time with a second arrow that Sihabahu sped against his father. Then the tenderness of the lion towards the boy was changed to wrath, and when Sihabahu sped a third arrow against the lion it pierced his body and the lion writhed on the sand before the cave and died, yet his death came about more by great grief than by reason of the arrow.

Then Sihabahu smote off the head of the lion with the mane and bore it to

the Capitol. And there he found that the King had already lain dead seven days, and when the ministers offered him the kingdom he handed it over to his mother's husband, and taking with him his sister, Sihasivali, he journeyed thence to the land of his birth, and there founded the mighty city of Sihapura, and about it he built many villages. In the fulness of time he chose a wife, and she bore him twin sons sixteen times. The eldest of the thirty-two sons was called Vijaya, but from a boy he grew up ill-mannered and turbulent, though his twin-brother, Sumitta, was mild and gentle in his bearing.

"Chastise thy son, O King," urged the people.

But as Vijaya grew to man's estate there was no holding him. He broke every law of the realm with impunity, and boasted about it afterwards.

The people groaned and murmured against his intolerable deeds of violence, and the boldest among them said to the King :—

"Slay thy son, O King."

Whereupon Sihabahu laid a plan to take and disarm his turbulent son, Vijaya, and with him seven hundred ruffians who hailed the Prince as their leader and went about armed with weapons to do his bidding. When the King had caused half their heads to be shaved he set them forth upon the sea in boats, and with many perils by the way the tide bore them to the shores of Lanka, the isle of sweet odours.

Now on that self-same day the Guide of the World disposed himself to pass into his Nirvana between the twin-like Sala trees.

THE MAN WHO RAN AFTER THE DOG.

II.—The Man Who Ran After the Dog.

HEN he who has five eyes, the Conqueror, the Incomparable, had lived eighty-four years and fulfilled all his duties in the world, than between the twin-like Sala-trees, on the day of full-moon in the month Vesakha, was the Light of the Universe extinguished. And lying there on the bed of his Nirvana, the Guide of the World spoke unto Indra, King of the Gods, who waited with other Gods beside his bed.

"Today is come Vijaya, a valiant prince, to Lanka from the country of Lala, with seven hundred of his soldiers. Protect him, Oh Lord of the Gods, and that island where he has set foot."

Whereupon Indra, the Lord of Gods, deputed out of respect the guardianship of Lanka, most lovely of islands,

to Vishnu, the God who is in colour like the blue lotus.

And quickly flying through the air the blue god hovered over the island and saw where Vijaya and his men drew up their boats on the shore.

So the blue God sat down at the foot of a tree in the guise of a wandering monk, and straightway Vijaya's men came crowding about him.

"Tell us, good monk," said one, "if there be food and drink upon this island, for woefully we hunger and thirst."

"Tell us whether there be men here or devils," said another, "for we have passed narrowly through many perils."

"Tell us the name of this island," said a third, "for tempest and flood have borne us from our reckoning."

Then the blue God told them that the name of the island was Lanka, lovely and blessed. "Food," he declared, "and drink, you will find in abundance, but of men there are none here, nor

will any dangers arise for your undoing."

Whereupon he sprinkled water on them from his bowl, and wound a thread about the hand of each as a talisman against the power of demons. Then he vanished into the air. And in his place stood a demon in the form of a dog.

Vijaya told his men not to take any notice of the dog.

But one of them argued with himself after this fashion. "No smoke without a fire," he said, "and no dog without a village. Save wild dogs only, who will not stand and sniff the robes of strangers. Moreover, in all villages one finds food and drink." So he ran after the dog.

Now the dog was a servant of Kuvanna, Queen of the demons. To whose feet he led the truant where she sat, spinning, after the manner of a woman hermit, under a tree that cast its shade beside a lotus pond.

When the man saw the pond he threw himself upon the ground and drank long draughts of the cool water, and then jumped in and laved his body in its freshness. Afterwards he gathered lotus buds and shaped a great leaf into a cup, and was for bearing it away to ease his friends' thirst and shew them what an enterprising young fellow he was.

But the woman hermit stopped spinning and said--

"Stay! Thou art my prey."

And the young man stood, as the saying is, rooted to the spot.

The demon queen would have liked to eat him, as she had rather counted on being able to do. But then she had known nothing about the magic thread. She tried to coax him to give it up. "Give me the thread, brave soldier."

But the young man was not altogether without discretion.

Kuvanna was furiously angry, and by a concentrated effort of will-power she managed to seize the young man

and throw him, despite his protestations, into a conveniently adjacent chasm.

Discipline was not particularly good among Vijaya's soldiers, and in some ways they were very like sheep. So by and by it happened that the six hundred and ninety-nine others all found themselves bemoaning their fate in likewise at the bottom of the chasm.

Now Vijaya was a truly great captain, and therefore solicitous for his men's welfare. Finding himself alone upon the shore he gathered up his sword, bow, battle-axe, spear, and shield. Nor of these weapons did he cast aside any one, for a great captain will ensure all possible precautions upon such an adventure.

Presently he reached the lotus pond, fair to look upon. He beheld also a hermit-woman, old and ugly, but of his soldiers not even the print of their feet. Wherefore, being a sagacious captain, his mind misgave him concerning the guile and knavery that lies in all

women. Yet to Kuvanna, who continued to spin, he spoke fairly.

"Lady," he asked, "hast thou not seen my men?"

"What wantest thou with thy people Prince?" she answered, "Drink thou, and bathe."

"So she knows my rank," thought Vijaya. "Proof enough that she is a demon." For he was a sagacious Prince.

Dexterously he plucked his bow from among the armoury that swung about his loins and rushed upon Kuvanna, catching her with the bowstring about the neck. Then, seizing her long hair with his left hand, he lifted his sword in the right, shouting terribly the while:—

"My men! Slave, give me back my men, or I put an end to thy devilry."

Kuvanna could do nothing but plead for her life, which she did very eloquently. She promised the Prince a kingdom, and even offered to marry him.

But Vijaya, who was a very prudent captain, bound Kuvanna by the most terrible oaths and conjurations not to betray him. Whom also, when these charges were laid upon her, he commanded only to bring thither his men with all speed.

And one after another each was jerked forth out of the chasm, till all the seven hundred stood before him.

"These soldiers must be hungry," said Vijaya.

With her distaff Kuvanna struck the ground at their feet, revealing a cavern holding vast stores of rice and many rich cargoes of the ships belonging to mariners whom she had devoured during many years.

The soldiers needed no command from their captain to set immediately about preparing curries and other sumptuous dishes, laying the same before Vijaya.

Now this Prince was a very gallant captain and one moreover not apt to bear malice overlong, so he very politely

invited Kuvanna to sit down and join him in his repast, of which with his own hands he served her the best portions. Moreover he gave the signal to his men that they also should satisfy their hunger.

Intrigued beyond measure both by the Prince's appearance and behaviour, Kuvanna bethought her of what promises she had made, and how she might effect some requital for treatment so far beyond her merits.

Being a demon and no mortal, she was able without difficulty to cast off the unpleasing form and habiliments that she had assumed and to take upon herself the lovely shape of a maiden in the flower of her youth, adorned with rare jewels and ornaments. Also she caused the demons, her subjects, to erect instantly a rich and elegant pavilion, marvellously furnished in fit manner with couches, draperies, and precious vessels. This she did while the Prince was meditating for a few moments, having eaten of the dishes and drunk cool water from the spring.

And when Vijaya raised his eyes, Kuvanna advanced in the beautiful and gracious guise of a maiden of sixteen years, and the Prince, well pleased, stood up and raised her hand, saluted her, and passed with her under the gorgeous canopy, and all the soldiers made their encampment in the surrounding forest, and the bridal feast continued far into the night.

THE THIRTY-THREE BRIDEGROOMS.

III.—The Thirty-three Bridegrooms.

HEN the great King Vijaya knew that his days were numbered he sent messengers bearing a letter to his brother Sumitta. "For," he said, "I am old, and all my sons are dead." And Sumitta's Queen had borne him three lusty sons, great in war and in hunting. When he had heard the letter Sumitta learnt how his brother was troubled on his death-bed for the welfare of his own people and for his realm of Lanka, beauteous and greatly favoured. And having pondered the matter Sumitta called to him his three sons.

"I also, my dear ones," he said, "am old, even as the great King my brother, and to the lot of one of you must fall the lordship of Lanka, the island of grateful perfumes. Choose now among you."

The two elder Princes considered this counsel in their hearts, but Panduvasudeva, youngest of the three, leapt up and saluted the King.

"I will go thither," he said.

"Be it so," answered the King. And orders were given for thirty-two sons of ministers to accompany the Prince on his journey, in the guise of wandering monks. And with a fair wind they came to Lanka, where holy men from the capital received them with great respect, for of this coming of Panduvasudeva the soothsayers had foretold. But because the Prince had chosen as yet no consort they delayed the full ceremony, though yielding him all prerogatives of Kingship.

Now in those days it fell out that on the further side of Ganges a King founded a city and begot seven sons and one daughter, fair of form and eagerly wooed. So radiant and exquisite a maiden was she that you would have thought her a woman made of gold, and for love of her the Kings

of seven countries sent gifts to her father's court. But being neither of firm will nor strong mind, and now moreover having no wife to manage the affair for him, the King hustled his daughter on shipboard with thirty-two girl friends to amuse her, and launched the ship on the Ganges. "Now," he said, "whosoever can, let him take my daughter." Then he went back to his apartments and finished the poem that he had been writing when the gifts arrived from the seven Kings. He told his sons that he had consulted the soothsayers, who had assured him that a sea voyage would be just the thing for their sister.

Meanwhile a favouring wind carried the Princess and her companions straight to the shores of Lanka, the odorous isle. There were no men on board, so they packed up all their best clothes, and they stepped ashore robed like nuns.

Fortunately they met a soothsayer almost at once.

"How many of you are there?" he asked the Princess.

"Thirty-three altogether," she said.

"That's right," said the soothsayer. "This way please." And he conducted the party by a quick and easy route to the capital, where Panduvasudeva and his thirty-two friends were still making high-brow conversation with the holy men, and beginning to get a little bored.

However the arrival of the Princess and her retinue put everything right. They all got married the same afternoon, and lived happily for a long time afterwards.

THE PRINCESS WHO LOOKED OUT OF HER WINDOW

IV.—The Princess Who Looked Out of her Window.

ANDUVASUDEVA and his Queen had ten sons. They called the eldest Abhaya, but nobody remembers the names of the others. Lastly they had a little daughter, so beautiful that she was almost lovelier than her mother. Her name was Citta, and when they saw her the holy men skilled in divination foretold that she would bring much trouble on her family.

"For the sake of sovereignty," they said, "will her son slay his uncles."

Most of her brothers were very indignant when they heard this. They even had thoughts of killing their little sister, but Abhaya persuaded them not to do anything so cruel.

They decided, however, that in view of what the diviners had said it would

be advisable to keep a very close watch on their sister, so Citta was lodged in a chamber that could only be reached through a hollow pillar in the King's private apartments. An old nurse slept in the Princess's chamber and looked after all her wants, and round the foot of the pillar and beneath Citta's window a hundred soldiers were always on guard. But from the very rumour of her loveliness all the young men among the King's subjects fell in love with the Princess. People no longer talked of Princess Citta, but of Umadacitta, "the Princess who drives men mad with her beauty."

One morning when Umadacitta was fifteen years old she looked out of her window. Below she saw, gazing straight up at her, a pretty boy. He bore himself gracefully like a Prince, and with eyes full of ardent longing he cast upon her a burning glance, but said nothing. "Who is that pretty boy?" she asked her old nurse. And the nurse looked out of the window as well.

"That is Gamani," she said, "a son of thy uncle, and one of the King's pages."

Now Gamani's gentle ways and love-lorn mien, for he had fallen in love with Umadacitta before he ever saw her, and for that reason had begged to be taken into the King's service, had already won the heart of the old nurse. She gave the soldiers a potion in their drink so that they slept, and that night she dropped down a hook-ladder from the window of Umadacitta's chamber, and up the ladder climbed Gamani, his heart on fire with love. He found that one burning glance into the Princess's eyes had told her all he wanted her to know. And the next night the ladder was there again, and many nights thereafter.

Now all this was of course very wrong, but no one except the old nurse knew anything about it for months and months. And then one morning there was a tremendous to-do in the palace. The old nurse was packed off to her

village in disgrace, the King and Queen both looked very much annoyed, and when Umadacitta peeped out of her window the people could see that she was crying bitterly.

The King summoned all his sons to a family conference.

"It looks as if the soothsayers were going to be right after all," he told them.

But Abhaya, the eldest brother, was all for moderation.

"We may as well talk it over as men of the world," he said, "and it might be a girl."

"Perhaps you're right," said the King. "And this young jackanapes comes of very good family. Suppose we give our consent to the wedding."

"Very well then," said the other sons.

But they whispered among themselves, "If it's a boy we will slay him."

Umadacitta guessed what her brothers were thinking, and when a new nurse arrived to look after her, for soon she became very ill, she whispered into her ear and gave her all the money in her purse. For on the day that she was married her father had given her a thousand pieces of gold to spend on what she liked. And one day a village woman was smuggled into the palace with a little baby in her arms. She scuttled out again in an hour or two, still nursing a little baby, but this one was a boy and the one she had brought in had been a little girl.

And Umadacitta's brothers stopped whispering among themselves, "for," they said gladly, "our sister has a little girl."

And that day the King Panduvasudeva died, and Abhaya, the eldest and kindest of the brothers, ruled in his stead.

THE NINE WICKED UNCLES.

V.—The Nine Wicked Uncles.

OW when a meddlesome soothsayer of the court sat weaving spells and making divinations after his evening meal, the ruse practised by Umadacitta upon her family became revealed to him, so that he rose up and hurried to tell the King's brothers what had befallen. These tidings of their sister's deceit became known to them as the Princes were about to set off hunting in the forest. But though their hearts were full of malice towards Umadacitta they tarried not in riding forth to the chase, and soon overtook the village woman hurrying to her house with Umadacitta's son hidden in a basket.

"What have you got there?" said one.

"A sweet cake for my daughter," said the woman, for she had been well rewarded.

"Show it to us," said the Princes.

Luckily for the boy he was under the protection of demons, who immediately caused a huge boar to spring forth out of a neighbouring covert. Full of anger though they were, the Princes were great sportsmen. They immediately spurred away after the boar, and were quickly lost to sight in the jungle. Trembling for her escape, the woman gave the baby to an old man whom the noise of the hunting had attracted thither, at the same time pressing into his hand the money she had received from the Princess. When he reached his village the old man found his wife had borne him a son that very day.

"Is it a boy?" asked the neighbours.

"Twins," he said.

When the Prince and his foster-brother were seven years old the soothsayer revealed to his uncles where the boy was hidden, and suggested a plan for getting rid of him.

For all the boys of that village were wont to play in a small pond. The

Prince, who was venturesome, had found one day in diving a certain hollow tree that had a hole below the water, through which he could creep inside the tree and stand upright, breathing freely. He would often stay long therein and come forth in the same way, never giving the secret away to his playmates, but leading them to impute his disappearances to the power of magic.

One day, acting on the soothsayer's advice, the uncles sent their servants to kill all the little boys as they bathed in the pool. Warned by a demon, the Prince kept his clothes on, dived into the water, and stayed hidden in his hollow tree. And when the servants had counted the clothes and killed all the other boys they went and told the uncles. "All the little boys," they said, "are dead."

So the Prince stayed with his foster-father until he was twelve years old. He was lonely at having nobody to play with, for his foster-brother was the

only one of his own age left in the village, and the Prince thought him a dull boy. He had never played with the others in the pond because he hated getting his feet wet. So the Prince asked if he might go and do odd jobs for the herdsmen.

Once more the uncles found out that the Prince was still alive, and sent for their followers, ordering them sternly to do better this time. That very day the herdsmen killed a deer in the forest and sent the Prince back to the village to bring fire that they might roast it. The Prince went home, but on the way he cut his foot on a stone, so he asked his foster-brother if he would mind carrying back the fire. "They are sure to give you some roast venison," he said, "because they promised me as much as I could eat." So his foster-brother hurried to take the fire to the herdsmen, and just as he reached them the uncles' followers surrounded the whole party and killed them. When they had eaten the venison themselves they went back and told the uncles.

The Prince was sixteen when his uncles found out that he was still alive after all. "We shall have to do the job ourselves this time," they said, and they got so angry and excited that Umadacitta overheard what they were talking about. She realized there was no time to be lost, and sent a trusty slave to the Prince with a thousand pieces of money and an earnest request to him to put as much distance as possible between himself and his uncles. The message and the money came safely to hand, and on the advice of his foster-father the Prince made the best of his way to a far province. He enquired whether there dwelt in those parts a holy man called Pandula. One showed him a house, and a holy man came out of it and asked the Prince: "Art thou Pandukabhaya, my dear?" for that was the name Umadacitta and her mother (who was in the secret) had given him at his birth.

"That am I," said the Prince.

"O happy day," said the holy man, "Thou wilt be a King, my dear, and

shalt rule for seventy years, and I will teach thee the art of governance." Which he did, and his own young son Canda shared the holy man's instruction, and profited much thereby.

Later on Pandula gave the Prince a hundred thousand pieces of money, and told him to enlist soldiers to help him fight for his kingdom. When five hundred men had been so obtained Pandula prepared to take his leave of the Prince, but first laid upon him two parting injunctions.

"For thy Queen," he said, "take unto thee the maiden at whose touch leaves turn to gold, and for the chief of thy ministers take thou my young son Canda."

Pandukabhaya thanked the holy man for all he had done for him, and seeing with pride how many warriors flocked eagerly to his standard he set forth to make war, proclaiming his name and the merits of his cause.

So with his army he came marching into a valley where the fields grew

ripe to harvest. In that country the land paid tribute to one of the Prince's wicked uncles, but Pandukabhaya himself was ignorant of this. His uncle, however, was directing the labour of his reapers, while his daughter Pali, a Princess of rare loveliness, made it her task to supply food and drink to her father and his vassals as they laboured in the fields. Some of Pandukabhaya's scouts saw this lovely maiden at her charitable task and sent back word of her beauty to their Prince, whereat Pandukabhaya came driving furiously in his own chariot, and halting beside the Princess asked her where she was going. She gave him fair speech, and, his heart fired with love, Pandukabhaya craved that with her own hands she might give him to eat and drink also.

So she stepped down from her chariot, and, at the foot of a banyan tree, graciously offered the Prince food in a golden bowl. And thinking to entertain his soldiers she plucked banyan leaves on which to offer them refreshment also, but on the instant the

leaves were changed into golden vessels. Pandukabhaya marvelled at this till he bethought him of the holy man's injunction, whereat he saluted the maiden, lifted her lightly into his own chariot, and rode on, fearless in the midst of his mighty warriors.

Pali's father was furious at such presumption, and despatched the whole of his army in pursuit of Pandukabhaya and his men. And lo, in a few hours, of this army only a battered remnant straggled back, and a like fate befel the Princess's five brothers and all their following. And in these great victories did Canda, the son of Pandula, prove himself a mighty captain and terrible in battle.

So Pandukabhaya held the lordship of all the country to the further shore of the river Mahaweliganga, and sojourned there four years. And there his uncles led another army to battle against him, and he chased them back and held their fortified camp two years. But when Abhaya, the only one of his

brothers not of a heart altogether evil, would have made peace with him, the other nine brothers reviled Abhaya and conspired to deprive him both of his sovereignty and his life.

THE MAGIC HORSE.

VI.—The Magic Horse.

OW in those days, hard by the Dumarakkha mountain, on the borders of Pandukabhaya's realm, a beauteous fountain bubbled forth, fair and clear, and in the pastures about its brink there grazed a horse, fleeter than lightning, with a white body and red feet. Travellers passing the fountain often saw this beautiful horse as it scoured the plain with scarlet hoofs, and tidings of this wonder came to Pandukabhaya.

So the prince took a noose and set forth alone to capture the horse. The beautiful creature was really a magic horse, and when he saw the prince artfully drawing near with the noose and marked his fierce and commanding mien the horse kicked up his vermilion heels and fled like lightning. So swift was his flight that the horse had no time to make himself invisible, yet

whenever he turned his head Pandukabhaya was just behind. So the horse and the Prince circled the fountain seven times with the speed of lightning. Then the horse plunged into the deep and swift Mahaweliganga river, yet the Prince followed, and climbing forth again he fled seven times round the Dumarakkha mountain, and three times more he circled the fountain and plunged a second time into the river at the ford called Kacchaka. But the Prince swam beside him, and seizing the horse by its mane he grasped with the other hand a palm leaf that came floating down the stream. Now the demons who protected the Prince turned this leaf into a great sword, and he thrust at the horse with the sword, crying: "I will slay thee!"

Then the magic horse spoke:—

"Do not slay me Lord," he said, "and so will I conquer the kingdom and give it to thee."

The Prince perceived that this was no ordinary horse, so still holding him

by the neck he bored his nostrils with the point of the sword and thus secured him with the noose that he had been carrying. But now the horse would have followed the Prince anywhere, rope or no rope.

Afterwards the Prince grew so fond of the horse that he was scarce ever out of the saddle, and never thought of walking so much as a yard. And four years he dwelt on the Dumarakkha mountain, training his armies for war. Then with his soldiers he rode to the mountain Arittha, and for seven years practised his armies in the art of battle, daring his uncles to come out and attack him.

And there came a day when eight of the Prince's uncles, having assembled together a huge army, rode forth and surrounded the Arittha mountain on every side. When he saw his enemies the Prince took counsel with the magic horse. Acting on the advice of the horse the Prince sent forward a company of soldiers bearing

kingly apparel and splendid weapons to the camp of his uncles, whom in a letter he besought with fair words for peace.

At this his uncles rejoiced. "He is afraid," they said, "and when he rides forth to greet us we will take him prisoner."

But now the Prince mounted his magic horse and led forth his mighty army to battle. The magic horse neighed loud and terribly, ten thousand of the Prince's warriors shouted their war-cry, and his soldiers who had carried gifts to the uncles raised an answering shout and fell upon their enemies where they stood, and the whole host of the Prince joining battle overcame all the enemy's army so that not a man remained alive. And of the eight uncles all were killed with their followers, and so was the prophecy of the soothsayers fulfilled.

And of the skulls of the vanquished the Prince's men raised a great pyramid, and at the top of the heap the

skulls of the eight wicked uncles gleamed yellow in the sun.

The Prince meditated upon the skulls of his enemies, where they lay piled in a pyramid.

"Tis like a pile of melons," he said, "A heap of yellow melons."

So having won his kingdom by valour, Pandukabhaya came to the dwelling of his great uncle Anuradha, and hard by, on the advice of the soothsayers, he founded the fair capital of Anuradhapura. He caused the state parasol of his uncles, taken on the battlefield, to be brought thither and purified in the sacred pond, and with water from the same he consecrated himself and the beauteous Pali, his Queen. On the young Canda he conferred the office of First Minister, and the magic horse and the demons that had befriended him he housed in the royal precincts with fitting honour. And Abhaya, his eldest uncle, who had dealt kindly by him, he made Guardian of the City by Night, and

to his father-in-law he gave the lordship of a rich province. And now that his eight other uncles were dead according to the prophecy, he reigned seventy years in the fair city of Anuradhapura, and on days of festival he sat before his subjects in an exalted seat, having gods and men to dance before him and taking his pleasure in joyous and merry wise.

THE ELEPHANT KANDULA.

VII.—The Elephant Kandula.

N the day that Viharadevi the Queen bore her lord a son were seen in Lanka many miracles and wonders. By the merit of this noble child alone there arrived, from one place or another, seven ships laden with manifold gems, and in like fashion an elephant of the six-tusked Chaddanta race was moved to bring thither his young one, foaled by the sacred Himalayan lake. So when a fisherman called Kandula perceived this splendid creature fanning his ears proudly by the shore he told the King of it, and the King sent his trainers to bring in the young elephant, and he was nourished with all care in the royal stable. And because Kandula had lighted upon him where he stood fanning his ears so was the name Kandula given to the elephant.

The elephant Kandula abode in the royal stable, with splendid trappings and richly nourished, until the King died. Now at that time Gamani his firstborn and Tissa his younger son each held lordship over half the kingdom, for from their youth these princes had dwelt apart. The news of their father's death coming first to Tissa, he carried out with all ceremony the funeral rites of the King, usurping the dignity of his brother. Thereafter, taking with him his mother Viharadevi and the elephant Kandula, he fled speedily to his stronghold of Dighavapi.

When he heard of his brother's presumption Gamani was filled with wrath. He had himself consecrated King without the loss of a moment. Then he sent Tissa a very curt letter.

"Send back the elephant Kandula and my mother," he said. For he regarded the elephant as even of greater importance than the Queen.

The Prince Tissa did not trouble himself to compose any answer, but

went about to improve the defences of his stronghold.

Gamani sent his brother two more letters, growing more and more ejaculatory in his language, but no answer came back. Seeing that his brother meant to defy his authority Gamani set forth to make war upon him. Yet the preparations made for the encounter by Tissa being far more elaborate than his own, Gamani and his following found themselves roughly handled. Many thousand of the King's warriors fell in the field, and he himself only escaped through the fleetness of his mare and the goodwill of the demons, who were friendly towards him on account of his piety and exemplary life, and so raised up a mountain between his pursuers and himself.

Learning caution from experience, Gamani waited till he had assembled sixty thousand warriors well exercised in arms before he again returned to attack his brother. When his army drew in sight of Tissa's camp great

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was the chagrin of Gamani to see how his brother was mounted upon the elephant Kandula, whom Tissa drove upon Gamani to overwhelm him. But the King's skill in horsemanship enabled him to prance lightly in a circle about the elephant, seeking how he might best hew at his brother with his sword. Finding no unguarded place he spurred his mare so that she leapt clean over the elephant's back, though the mighty blow which he dealt in mid-air only scratched the tough hide of the elephant Kandula.

Inspired by the gallantry of their leader, Gamani's warriors fell upon the armies of Tissa and scattered them to rout.

The elephant Kandula wept huge tears of mortification.

"A creature of the female sex has used me contemptuously," he reflected with bitterness, "and the fault is that of the feeble creature who bestrides me."

So turning aside from the battle he rushed beneath a large tree, with

intent to scrape the cowardly prince from his back and trample on him. But Tissa leapt nimbly upon a branch and clung thereto like a monkey, while the elephant in disgust sought out his rightful lord and bent his knees before him. Gladly Gamani mounted the elephant Kandula and rode in this wise to his royal palace.

After seven years the King forgave his brother, and thereafter allotted to him direction of the work of harvest. Then the King by reason of his virtue made a plan for the punishment of the Damilas, seeing that men of this race went about seeking to shatter the sacred memorials and throw down the walls of the shrines by night. Mounted therefore upon the elephant Kandula, with chariots troops, and apes riding upon horses, and before him a relic borne upon the point of his own spear, he journeyed forth to acquire glory and merit. And many strongholds of the Damilas he overthrew and destroyed, and so drew rein at last before the mighty citadel of Vijitanagara. Pon-

dering how he might encompass the downfall of this stronghold he made trial of his paladins, for among his captains were ten commanders each having the strength of ten elephants. Of these none was of a strength surpassing Nandhimitta, who as a boy was wont to go about by night hunting the Damilas who desecrated the temples, and catching them was wont to tear them asunder, treading one leg down with his foot while he grasped the other, and so casting their limbs over the city walls. And to judge whether his strength remained to him the King commanded the elephant Kandula to seize Nandhimitta and overpower him, yet seeing the elephant come upon him Nandhimitta took him by the tusks with bare hands and so forced him to his haunches. Whereat the King was glad, but the elephant Kandula was filled with bitter grief.

Then the King's warriors set out to storm the stronghold Vijitanagara. And the Damilas within shut fast the four gates, and at each gate the

paladins did great deeds and slew many Damilas. For the city was guarded by a lofty wall and three deep trenches, and its four gates fashioned of iron cunningly welded.

Placing himself upon his knees, the elephant Kandula battered to earth stones, bricks, and mortar, while with his tusks he smote upon the gates of iron. And the Damilas standing upon the tower hurled down balls of red-hot iron and molten pitch on the back of the elephant. Tormented with pain, Kandula turned from the gates and was fain to betake himself to a pond, and wallowed therein for ease of his pains.

Thereat the King's paladins mocked the elephant Kandula.

"None of us are here for our health," they shouted: "And don't imagine that these gates have fallen down yet, because they haven't."

Then the elephant Kandula gave one mighty heave, and trumpeting with rage he lurched up out of the pond and stood heedless of his wounds, and

when the elephants' physician had washed away the pitch and anointed him with balm, the King himself mounted the elephant, and stroking his temples he encouraged him and spoke him fair.

"To thee, dear Kandula," he said, "I give the lordship of a prince over the whole isle of Lanka, as if thou hadst been my son."

When slaves from the royal stables had given him choice fodder, and put upon his brow and shoulders his armour and about his back and belly bound a sevenfold buffalo-skin and above it a hide steeped in oil, Kandula set forth to destroy the gates. Roaring like thunder he came, daring danger, so that with his tusks he pierced the panels, and ground to powder the threshold beneath his feet. And so the towers of the gate fell about his shoulders, but these did the paladin Nandhimitta dash aside with his arms, and for this service Kandula ceased from his former wrath towards

THE PERFECT PRINCE.

VIII.—The Perfect Prince.

CERTAIN King in Kalaniya married a Queen more beautiful than virtuous, whose lovers were wont to send her messages by the hand of a slave wearing a monk's habit. But one day, as the King went forth from the palace with his consort, the slave dropped a letter from the folds of his garment, even as he stood by the door in the habit of a monk. The King, turning quickly, saw what had been done, and in his wrath he slew both the slave and a holy man who did but stand by his side, knowing naught of the trick. Wroth at such impiety, the sea-gods made the sea overflow the land, and to appease them the King put upon a golden ship his beautiful and pious daughter Devi. On the ship was written "a King's Daughter," and so the

King launched her upon the sea, and saw her no more.

Yet was the lovely and blameless damsel guarded by the spirits, and so came safe to the shores of Lanka, where the King made her his Queen, and from that time her name became Viharadevi, and she bore the King two sons.

The first-born was the Prince Gamani, at whose birth befel manifold wonders and auspicious omens, and the other was Prince Tissa, who warred with his brother for the Kingdom. Now Tissa was unworthy, but from his boyhood was Gamani great in war and in devout works. Yet in their childhood the King, full of pious zeal, sought to rear up both his sons in like manner, so that they might shun evil ways and glorify the doctrine.

The King made it a habit on days of festival to set rice-milk before five hundred holy men, ministering to them with his consort Viharadevi. And,

when they had eaten, the King would gather what remained into three portions, placing the same before his sons.

"Never, my dear ones," he would say, "will we turn away from the holy men, the guardian spirits of our house. With such thoughts eat ye these portions."

And further he would say.

"Ever will we two brothers be without enmity one towards another. With such thoughts eat ye these portions."

And obediently the brothers devoured each his portion as they had been ambrosia.

Then to try his sons would the King say:

"Never will we fight with the Damilas who desecrate the sacred shrines. With such thoughts eat ye these portions."

Now Tissa had enough wits to know what might be expected of him here, and so dashed the food away with his

hand, but Gamani, whose heart overflowed with wrath for the trespasses of the Damilas, went further.

Not only did he throw his portion of rice on the ground but went and cast himself upon his bed, neither bestowing his limbs in easy wise but curling up both hands and feet, and so lay cramped upon his bed.

Then his parents marvelled, and his pious mother Viharadevi caressed Gamani.

"What are you behaving like this for, my darling son?" she said.

"What do you think?" answered Gamani. "When over there across the Mahaweliganga river are the Damilas, and on the other side here is the ocean, how can I possibly lie down in any other way?"

And the worthy King his father heard the words of his son and was silent.

By the time he was sixteen years old Gamani had mastered everything that

a Prince ought to know. Skilled he was in guiding elephants and horses and in wielding the sword and the bow, neither did he turn aside from the pious precepts laid upon him by his father. And out of the impetuosity of his youth, and because the King had given into his command half his army, with troops and chariots, Gamani reviewed his host and sent boldly to his father, saying: "I will make war upon the Damilas." But the King grew old and was fearful for his son, so he ordered Gamani rather shortly to keep his troops inside his own borders and let the Damilas alone so long as they abode on their own side of the river.

Gamani was highly annoyed at being snubbed in this fashion, so much so that he mocked at his father.

"If the King were a man he wouldn't talk in that feeble way," he told his companions. "I think he had better put this on." And he sent the King a woman's ornament.

Angry indeed was the King when he saw his son's impertinence.

"Make a golden chain and bind this whelp," he said. "He needs protection badly."

And Gamani fled from his father's wrath to a far province.

Of the death of the King his father, and how he warred with his brother Prince Tissa, one may read in the tale of the elephant Kandula. Yet in many other battles did Gamani overcome his adversaries and acquire merit and honour. And with the years he grew wise, and ever his piety increased, so that when his enemies mocked at his soldiers, crying falsely that Gamani's men knew not friends from foes, and merely went about slaying whomsoever they encountered, the King made a solemn proclamation.

"Not for the joy of sovereignty is this toil of mine," he said, "but for the greater glory of the doctrine. Who says otherwise, lies, and for a token

of this may the armour of my soldiers be turned to the colour of fire."

And even so it was, so that all men marvelled.

So after many battles, riding upon the elephant Kandula and with his paladins supporting him on either hand, did Gamani subdue Elara, King of the Damilas, and with him the mighty and terrible champion Dighajantu, even though he leaped eighteen cubits into the air and slew every man of the first company of Gamani's troops. For he fell smitten by an arrow from the bow of Pussadheva, captain of the King's archers. And with his own hand Gamani slew Elara, as he sat mounted on the elephant Kandula, who overcame Elara's elephant with his tusks, and the body of Elara the King ordered to be buried with solemn rites and did there build a monument, and at that place the Princes of Lanka were wont for many generations to silence their music when they rode by.

And in his last combat Gamani overcame Bhalluka, for he alone remained of all his foes, and this the King did through the guile of the elephant Kandula, who yielded his ground slowly, only halting at the appointed place of victory, though hitherto in twenty-eight battles he had never retreated. And Bhalluka was slain by the mighty Pussadheva, who let fly an arrow into his mouth as he stood casting insults at Gamani, and as he fell Pussadheva sped a second arrow that twisted his body in the air, so that he lay with his head rather than his feet towards the King.

Thereafter, at the close of day, Gamani sat on the terrace of his royal palace, lighted with fragrant lamps and odorous with perfumes, having nymphs to dance before him. Yet he knew no joy, mindful that through his great victories had perished a million human beings. And the holy men becoming through their merit aware of this, out of love for Gamani they sent

eight venerable ones of their order to comfort the King.

When the holy men had mounted the steps of the royal palace Gamani greeted them and did them reverence, and as soon as they were seated he craved to know the reason of their coming, so they told him of the concern the brotherhood had by reason of the King's grief.

"How shall I look for comfort, venerable sirs," said Gamani, "since it is entirely owing to me that a million have lost their lives?"

"How many did you say?" said the eight monks.

"I said a million, but that's only a rough estimate. Not more I hope, and perhaps a few less, but it seems quite a lot."

Then the eight holy men took counsel together, and turning to the King the eldest and most venerable of them spoke comforting words.

"We find, O Lord of men," he said, "that there has been a little mistake. By thy great and glorious deeds arises no hindrance in thy way to bliss, or rather none to speak of. Strictly speaking, only one and a half human beings have been slain by thee. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, no more to be esteemed than beasts."

"I'm very glad to hear you say so," said King Gamani. And he clapped his hands and ordered the dancing girls to come up on the terrace again and repeat their performance.

Rama and Yasodhara.

Rama and Yasodhara.

Y the royal pool of Kandy, where at dusk the palace of the Queens still throws shadows that bob crazily in the ripples lapping its island floor, you may see tourist ladies with veils and parasols driving on the new road. But once the woods and the water melted into each other. And there were no globe-trotting ladies, and the Queen's Palace was no heap of ruins strangled by jungle creepers but a masterpiece in fretted stone, every block as it left the mason's hand whitened with lime, laid carefully in oil, and baked in the noonday sun, so that the palace was as white as a wedding cake.

But when the twilight falls, and the quick-cooling air has hurried the tourist ladies back to their hotels to dress for dinner and begun to draw delicate

catspaws across the pool, the night-things slip from their hiding places. There is a rustling and a flapping in the shadows, dancing points of fire above the pool.

A little brown bird flits ghost-like from one stone to another on the Queen's island, flickers landward and back again, hangs poised above the shadows where the lotuses sleep.

* * * * * * * *

There were no clocks at the palace, but Yasodhara always knew when it was time to get up. She came skipping through colonnaded verandahs and down steps graven curiously with elephants, birds, and crocodiles, under the temple trees whence the mynahs squawked her a "good morning," and so to the little shaded arbour, where queens might sit and dabble rosy feet in the ripples, sighing idly for the miracle of wings. She had a small bowl of rice in one hand.

Daintily, she began to give the sacred fish their breakfast.

"Ohe, brothers"—a handful of grain dropped among the lotus leaves. There was a subaqueous turmoil of swirling and scurrying, a splash or two, a shimmering of gold and silver bodies bent like bows, a nuzzling and jostling of leathery backs, a glimpse from the deeps of goggle, red-rimmed eyes.

A baby tortoise bobbed up among the leaves, stretched an absurd neck interminably upwards, and bent upon her a stony, expressionless stare.

Yasodhara protruded a small foot that was perfect in its contours. There was a gleam of honey-tinted loveliness—she was a Ranliya, "Golden Creeper" girl.

One tap upon his back sent Peeping Tom to cover ere he could wink a horny eyelid.

Then she looked over her shoulder and dropped bowl and rice at her feet.

Six feet away, a river-god crouched among the reeds.

Antinous at sixteen might have been his twin, Antinous warmed by more southern suns to a matter of three

shades deeper than the golden glory of Yasodhara herself.

"Dog," said that young woman, "whose fathers were dogs, I will clap my hands and in the twinkling of an eye you will be dead."

"Clap then" and he stood up, dripping, straight as a spear. "I am neither hind nor fisherman, but Rama, Son of Kings, of the Blood of the Lion."

"Who spies on women."

"Not with purpose. From tracking the stag at its first grazing, I came heated to swim. I am shamed and ask pardon. I will go back."

But this queen was thirteen, and lacked playfellows, and this prince not much above a child, and in five minutes each was scattering the recovered rice among shamefully pampered fish, and two unoccupied arms, I blush to admit it, were about each other's necks.

"And so, to my marriage I set forth from my father's house with women and slaves to attend me, bearing also a

fan, a diadem, ear ornaments, yellow sandalwood, a set of garments that had no need of cleansing, a spiral shell winding in auspicious fashion to the right, threescore measures of mountain rice brought thither by parrots, and moon-stones such as are scattered only where the foot of Lord Buddha has pressed. You now, who say you are a prince, tell me of this lion your ancestor."

"Of a truth the great-uncle of my grandfather was that Sihabahu whose mother became wife to the King of Beasts, as the soothsayers had foretold, of a strength exceeding the strength of men, and with hands and feet like a lion's, so that he rolled away stones from before his father's cave and on his back bore mother and sister both to the cities of men, and thereafter acquired much merit."

"Your feet are not like a lion's. They are like mine. You are a liar."

"Verily the right blood of the Lion beats in my heart, and I am strong. I will bear you to my father's country,

who is also a King. I could carry your Lord's other wives also, but will not. Or rather we will dwell in that cave, a good cave which I found hunting, where sits my Lord Buddha, of good omen, wrought marvellously beside the threshold. And before sit many lesser gods."

"You will show me these stones. But then I will come back. Neither will I be carried, but in a canoe by water, whence I will walk, if it be near."

"A bowshot from the shore."

"Then when the air cools and the flying foxes rise up you will bring the canoe and hide it. I will cross alone. You, who would bear on your back King's daughters, may swim. Where the jak-tree throws its shadow, wait."

Rama slipped away like an otter.

The temple-tree swayed in a cloud of drowsy perfume, and a pebble tinkled among the boulders. Yasodhara knew it for the haunt of green lizards and a host of furtive, quick-eyed folk.

Rama came up the track, walking cat-footed, straight and slim as a lance. Here was the jak-tree, here in a moment would come, treading delicately, a golden dryad. A branch snapped, a huge jak-fruit weighing fifty pounds struck where neck joins shoulder, and the boy dropped without a cry. The two King's huntsmen slid earthwards and crouched over the motionless thing in the path. A confused, formless group detached itself from the shadows and staggered, softly grunting, into the void. Sound died in the jungle. Down in the pool a great fish splashed among the lotuses.

Yasodhara shivered as she peered among the reeds, bending them hurriedly this way and that. Her hand met the prow of a tiny fishing canoe.

There was a clink of bracelets as she tucked her draperies about her knees, a grating of pebbles as she pushed out and headed,not too expertly, for the dark wall of jungle. A great tree towered above its fellows, and she altered her course.

On the other side it was cold, and the forest strangely still. No green fireflies danced tonight in the brush-wood. Sedgy growths stroked her knees with chill fingers, but Yasodhara's little feet pressed leaves that were sticky and warm. Furled blossoms nodded, and the lily-pads swung to and fro athwart the mirror of the pool.

But it was not the face of a King's daughter that the mirror gave back.

* * * * *

Very gently Yasodhara stretched out her arms.

* * * * *

Up from the shadows where the lotuses slept, flickering about the towers of the Queen's Palace, skimming back and forth where the dark woods melted into the water, flew a little brown bird.

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